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Watson's Art Journal.

NEW YORK, SATURDAY, JAN. 11, 1868.

PUBLICATION OFFICE, CLINTON HALL, ASTOR PLACE.

THE NEW OPERA HOUSE.

Thursday evening inaugurated the new enterprise already known to the public as Pike's Opera House. The occasion was marked, especially, by the first appearance in this city, for a long period, of the Strakosch Operatic Company, with Madame La Grange as prima donna, Brignoli and Massimiliani as tenors.

It is needless for us to speak anything about the house; we have already in these columns given a description of it. It only remains to say that under the full glare of the gas, and with 4,000 people filling every seat, and every available inch of standing room, the interior came out as the most brilliant and beautiful one we have ever seen in this country or in Europe. There is a chasteness and richness in the embellishment, and a skill in lighting, that gives it effectiveness beyond our most sanguine expectation.

Of the acoustic properties of the house it is only necessary to say that several times during the evening most excellent opportunities occurred to test, when the vast audience held its very breath to catch the lowest murmur of La Grange, and found that not a note was marred.

The opera was *Trovatore*; La Grange as Leonora, Adelaide Phillips, Azeeuna, and Massimiliani as Manrico. Possibly it was the warm effect of the house that seemed to put the audience in good humor from the very start. They looked for something good, and found it in their old love, La Grange, acknowledging her by the most hearty reception ever accorded to any artiste. To speak of her singing seems hardly necessary beyond saying that this charming artiste returns to us with all the voice of the olden time, and all the force and finish that first recommended her to the public sympathy. That the public thought so was apparent on the fall of the curtain at the close of the first act, when the house rose to accord her a perfect ovation. She was called forward accompanied by Massimiliani and Orlandini, and greeted with tumultuous applause, to say nothing of several of the most elegant bouquets ever laid at a prima donna's feet. In fact, through the whole opera there was a response from the house to every pleasant effort of the artists, only one small circumstance occurring to cross the perfect smoothness of the whole, and that

unworthy of mention where so much was beautiful.

In the audience, the press was in full force, and the artistic world well represented, but the fashionable world was predominant, and we will venture to say that never in the best days of the Academy of Music has it seen a more brilliant and distinguished assemblage than Pike's Opera House on Thursday night.

At the conclusion the call was for Mr. Pike, who came forward looking as though he might be happy, and was greeted with a storm of applause and huzzas symbolical of American enthusiasm. As soon as there was silence, Mr. Pike, in response to the whispers of a few thousand people for a speech, said that he did not make speeches, but he built opera houses; but that, following the old rule of make a speech or sing a song, he would do the first. He had never sung but two songs in his life; one was something to a young lady about sharing his cottage, and she shared it; the other was about not going home till morning. The result of the latter he did not tell the audience, but we think they imagined it. He ended by declaring that there was a gentleman in the house who could make a speech, seeing that he had built the theatre, and called upon Mr. Calvert Vaux to respond, which Mr. V. did by coming to the front of a box and bowing; after which the audience went good naturedly out into the cold, humming Verdi and thinking seriously of hot supper and Delmonico.

All told, the inauguration of Pike's Opera House we look upon as a great success.

ENGLISH OPERA -- ACADEMY OF MUSIC.

The performances by Richings Opera Company this week have been confined to the old familiar operas, which do not demand any special comment. The preparations necessary to produce in proper style Wallace's beautiful Opera "*The Desert Flower*," compelled the management to postpone the performance from Friday evening of this week until next Monday evening, when it will positively be given.

WHAT THE THEATRES ARE DOING.

Open!

In the name of—

THE ART JOURNAL!

"You can't come in, sir!" says the Cerberus at the door.

We looked to see his three heads, but found only one; and that was upon the body of a very quiet looking individual with all the attributes of humanity. This individual followed up his conversation by saying:

"You can't pass here, sir, without an order from Mr. Vincent."

"I am Mr. Vincent!" said we.

The Cer—door-keeper looked at us—quererly; it was plain he didn't see the likeness; therefore, we continued:

"I am Mr. Wheatley—" (another pause); I am the ART JOURNAL, (doorkeeper unmoved); I am public opinion, (no use).

"Must have an order from Mr. Vincent, sir!" says this man of iron.

"Very well, then, take in my card."

The card was taken in, and in a moment, following like the flash upon the match to gunpowder, came Vincent, and we had the *entree*.

Now, then! we think we hear said, what is this *entree*, and who is Vincent?

While we pleasantly satisfy curiosity on the first point, we deprecate ignorance on the second.

The *entree* was to Niblo's, that we might see a rehearsal of the new play; the WHITE FAWN!

As to Vincent: why Vincent is stage manager at that same place, and if there is upon the face of the *theatrical earth* any more energetic, hard-working, iron-constituted, mechanical-intellectual individual in that line, why—we would like to see him.

And so, we found ourselves on the stage at Niblo's during the rehearsal of the new piece, "*The White Fawn*," and we will venture to say that six people outside of the profession in New York, can't say the same thing, to-day.

And it is to these same outsiders that we desire to talk. Have you ever seen the rehearsal of a play? If so; have you ever seen the rehearsal of a *new* play; and thirdly, have you ever seen the rehearsal of "*The White Fawn*." No! we rather think not! And if not; all the pens that ever were made can't describe it.

Coming from the light of the street at 2 P. M., it was hard to accommodate our eyes to the more than semi-light into which we were ushered. Not only was it the light that bothered us, but swinging before our very eyes were sundry huge masses which took the form of clouds, tropical foliage, verdant bowers, and various other delightful shapes, which in spite of the proximity, which we are told by Mr. Shakspeare—a writer of the 16th century—destroys enchantment, were decidedly pleasant to look at, as being associated with certain memories.

Getting our eyes out of the clouds, we brought them to earth, and found it—if the boards of the stage can be considered as earth—peopled.

In the first place, as a centre piece we saw a pretty, natty figure of a woman, away down by the foot lights, singing, and we noticed that whatever she was singing she sang as though she meant to sing. We don't know who this was, but have a suspicion it was Fanny Stockton. If it was Fanny Stock-

ton, we have only to say that she is just as pretty in citizen's dress—isn't that right—as she is on the stage, and that is saying a great deal.

While we were looking at that, we also noticed that the orchestra was full, and that Mollenhauer looked anxious.

Getting over the song, we began to realize the fact that something was going on from the circumstance that Wheatley was on the stage, in person, that Harry Palmer was there also—more than in person—and that Vincent looked haggard, and was in several spots at once. We gazed upon a confused multitude swarming all over the stage, and out into the body of the house, and concluded to make some attempt to count it up. The result was about as follows:

Ballet girls—counting legs and all—about 200—Children—from one year old, up to twelve when they became women and men—300.—Other people 150.

Perhaps some may object to this count, but we think we can count even if we can't do anything else, and that was about the number of humans that swarmed on the stage at the rehearsal of the "White Fawn." As a natural inquiry, it will be asked "What were they doing?" There is exactly where we are at fault, but when we say that from 2 P. M. until 4 A. M., which is 14 hours, we looked at them, and looked with interest, then they must have been doing something.

There was the ballet in every variety of form, from the beautiful creature in pink tights and gauze, shortskirts, who disdained to tread the boards—even at rehearsal—unless in full dress, down to the modest, pretty faced girl, in her every day working dress and shabby bonnet, who came for the \$6 per week and all dresses found—a sum, that as contrasted with the petty pay of work-shops and stores, is a fortune—and who keeps aloof from the crowd, but is always responsive to the ballet master's call. And in all this crowd of 200, what a study is there. Some that will make the future mothers of our country, perhaps—in spite, Mr. Moralist, of your objecting sneer—to fill the very highest stations in the land, and be represented by their children upon the senatorial benches, or the Presidential chair itself, and some, alas! who will sink to the lowest human grade and fall.

"Like the snow flakes from Heaven to—hell,"

and date, perhaps, their first step from this very association, which does not argue against the association, but against society which constitutes laws and customs, by which such a fall can be ruinous.

And next come the children. We travel about among them and wonder where, or by what mechanism, the management can gather together such a family. Here are infants of every shade and color. Little nondescripts,

such as we have never seen in the streets, or in any houses that we have visited. Children who seem like elves, or like old people; with a weird look out of the eyes, or with aged faces and shriveled hands. Children who have known what hunger means, and who never ate a *pate de foi gras* in their lives, or drank a bottle of Chambertin. Children who have beautiful blue eyes and clear skins, and who look up in wonder when spoken to, and—strangest of all—fall as naturally into the drill-master's hands, who makes angels or demons of them as easily, according to the exigencies of the piece, as though they had been practicing all their lives. Children with quaint clothing that shows the handiwork of some tailor far off in the German or Irish land, and children the very cut of whose clothes, and the expression of whose faces, says some sympathetic words about the home that once cherished them in luxury, perhaps, but certainly in comfort that did look forward to, or dream of this night upon the stage.

Under the hands of their encouraging drill-masters the little ones go through wonderful manoeuvres that seem impossible when thought of in connection with such puppets; and amid marches, countermarches, charges, fallings back, and fallings down, are in a moment mixed up with the ballet, and a mob of full grown bipeds, who will, without doubt, be transformed into gorgeous knights, heralds, or monarchs even, as the caterpillar makes the butterfly, at the command of the indomitable Vincent.

As these representatives of infancy crawl on to the stage, like so many termites, they are seized by the not ungentle hands of manager, stage manager, ballet master and subs, and in an instant order comes out of chaos, but order that is only understood by those interested. The outsider sees only a bunch of humans, diminutive and noisy, and wonders how out of this can come the wondrous spectacle that will charm his eyes and ears a week hence. He sees the shabby cory-phaee, and in spite of her pretty face and well made legs, wonders how such material can be kneaded and mixed into the palatable cake that will be offered in such a few days. And yet from this crude mass must come one of the most beautiful theatrical spectacles ever seen in the world. From it will be evolved fairies, demons, kings, knights in armor, beautiful ladies, and every form the human shape can occupy; while from the "clink of hammers closing rivets up," and the determined clatter of workmen in every grade of mechanics, keeping time, always, to the jargon of voices, there is a promise of something wondrous to us next Wednesday night, in the White Fawn.

It is hard to make any, not familiar with theatres, understand the meaning of getting

up such a piece as this, but a glance at a rehearsal ought to make them know it. To say nothing of the intense brain and bodily labor, carried through twenty hours of the day, some understanding can be arrived at when it is known that the expenditure, as it is now going, is equal to \$5,000 per day, and that the whole piece will cost, when the curtain goes up next Wednesday night, so close to \$100,000 that there is no fun in it—not the piece—but the financial reckoning.

Next week we shall say what we think of it before the curtain.

EDITORIAL ITEMS.

MR. GEORGE W. MORGAN has left the city for a few days, having been engaged to open an organ in Albany. Towards the end of the present month he will display a very large, and, by all accounts, a very beautiful organ, made by the Hooks, of Boston, and erected by them in New Haven. Mr. Morgan's services are in constant demand in every section of the country, when people want to hear new organs to the best advantage, for he is unrivalled in this country in perfect control over all the resources of the king of instruments. By the by, what is the reason that we never hear Mr. Morgan at the Sunday evening concerts, or the other concerts? Is there any screw loose? Is there a small break in the sacred circle of the "ring?"

THE YOUNG AND RISING CONTRALTO, Miss Antonia Henne, made a brilliant success at the last Sunday Evening Concert. She was encored in all she sang. After Mercadante's Aria she sang a new ballad with such fine taste and expression, that the enthusiastic applause would have warranted its repetition. It shows off her beautiful voice to great advantage. She also received a hearty encore for her singing Schubert's Wanderer. Notwithstanding Miss Henne's decided success with the public, the sagacious writer in the N. Y. *Herald* pronounced her a failure, and generously omitted to state that she was really three times encored. We suppose this lady is outside the "ring." The writer in the *Tribune* also displays great critical acumen by specially distinguishing the high notes of a contralto voice. These reliable writers went into ecstasies recently over an Aria announced for, but not sung by Parepa. Criticising without being present is a dangerous system, although it considerably lightens the personal labor.

DECKER BROTHERS. — The elder of the Decker Brothers, who left last summer for a visit to Europe, has just returned. He went away an irresponsible single-Decker, but comes back a responsible double-Decker, for he took a snap-judgment upon Time, and added to his pleasure trip a bridal tour. In point of fact, Mr. Decker has been and